

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02267 211404Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 ACDA-12 /085 W
-----127615 211407Z /53

O R 211316Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7713
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2267

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS LE MOPS
SUBJ: ASSAD RIZK ON CABINET RESIGNATION, BEIRUT SECURITY
SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EDUCATION IN
OUTGOING CABINET, ASSAD RIZK, ATTRIBUTES CABINET
RESIGNATION TO AYN AR-RUMMANEH-SHIAH INCIDENTS BECAUSE
SUBSEQUENT CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN ON A
DIRECT, GENERALIZED CHARACTER WITHOUT SUGGESTIONS OF
RESPONSIBLE ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION. RIZK EXPECTS
A "POLITICAL" CABINET WILL BE FOREMED, AND HOPES THIS
WILL INDUCE POLITICAL LEADERS TO TAKE MORE
RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE. HOWEVER, HIS HOPES THAT A NEW
CABINET COULD BE FORMED QUICKLY WERE DAMPENED BY
PUBLICATION OF VARIOUS PARTY POLITICAL DEMANDS IN BEIRUT
PRESS APRIL 20. HE SEES INDICATION THAT WHAT HAPPENED
IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH COULD ALSO HAPPEN IN ASHRAFIYAH,
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02267 211404Z

WHERE THE POPULATION IS NOT PHYSICALLY OR PSYCHOLOGICALLY
PREPARED FOR SUCH A SITUATION. DEATH AND DESTRUCTION
WOULD BE FAR GREATER. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY AID REPRESENTATIVE CALLED ON OUTGOING MINISTER
FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EDUCATION ASSAD RIZK APRIL 20.

3. RIZK SAID THAT TECHNOCRATS OF HOSS GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO FEEL OUTSIDE CRITICISM MORE HEAVILY THAN BEFORE AFTER THE AYN AR-RUMMANEH-SHIAH INCIDENTS. THE CABINET HAD TAKEN IN STRIDE ATTACKS ON INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS OVER THE PAST 16 MONTHS, BUT MOST RECENT CRITICISM TOOK ON CHARACTER OF DIRECT POLITICAL ATTACKS ON WHOLE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT SUGGESTIONS OF RESPONSIBLE ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION. HE IMPLIED THAT THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERS WERE ACTING IRRESPONSIBLY. HE THOUGHT THAT BRINGING THE POLITICIANS INTO THE GOVERNMENT WOULD AT LEAST REDUCE THEIR CURRENT FREEDOM FROM RESPONSIBILITY.

4. ON APRIL 19, HE AND OTHER CABINET MEMBERS WERE HOPEFUL THAT A NEW POLITICAL CABINET COULD BE FORMED RAPIDLY. HOWEVER, AFTER REVIEWING THE DEMANDS BEING MADE BY THE VARIOUS PARTIES IN THE APRIL 20 PRESS, HE THOUGHT THAT IT MIGHT TAKE LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED.

5. ASHRAFIYAH ANOTHER AYN AR-RUMMANEH? RIZK SAID EVIDENCE WAS ACCUMULATING THAT WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO AYN AR-RUMMANEH COULD ALSO HAPPEN TO ASHRAFIYAH. FOR EXAMPLE, EARLIER IN THE WEEK FOUR SYRIAN OFFICERS CAME UPON A PNL ROADBLOCK IN ASHRAFIYAH AND WERE PREVENTED FROM PASSING. THE INCIDENT WAS CONTAINED BY "RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS," BUT THIS AND OTHER SIMILAR INCIDENTS SUGGESTED THAT "BOTH SIDES WERE SPOILING FOR

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 02267 211404Z

A FIGHT AND IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME."

6. ASHRAFIYAH, UNLIKE AYN AR-RUMMANEH, WAS NOT ON THE CONFRONTATION LINE DURING THE 1975-76 CIVIL WAR. IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH, THE POPULATION WAS ACCUSTOMED TO A WAR-TIME SITUATION AND HAD ACCEPTED A CERTAIN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN DISCIPLINE. PEOPLE AUTOMATICALLY TOOK TO SHELTERS AT THE SOUND OF A RIFLE SHOT, AND MILITIA ON ALERT WERE ALMOST CONSTANTLY PRESENT. IN ASHRAFIYAH, HOWEVER, AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE WOULD CATCH MANY MORE PEOPLE UNAWARES; THE KILLING AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY WOULD BE FAR GREATER.
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